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to receive the carrier lifting tongue.

REMARKS

The Office Action of November 6, 2000, objected to the drawings because Figure 6 appears to be crossed out by an "X". One Figure 6 was crossed out because it was duplicated by the other Figure 6, except that the remaining Figure 6 is in more detail than the crossed out Figure 6. As clarified with the enclosed amended informal drawings, the crossed out Figure 6 has been removed entirely to avoid confusion. Furthermore, a crossed out Figure 3 has been removed in a similar fashion as its features are illustrated on other figures.

The claims are presently rejected due to what the applicant believes is a misunderstanding as to the claimed element of a downwardly projecting central support. This element was intended to be described as being relatively central to the deck. The independent claims have been amended to clarify that the central support is located intermediate each pair of opposing sides of the deck.

The Office Action rejected claims 1-6, 15, 16, 18 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Haskins, U.S. Pat. No. 3,995,749. As affected by the amendment to claim 1, claims 1-6, 15, 16 and 20 are not believed to be anticipated by Haskins. Specifically, amended claim 1 requires the central support to be intermediate both pairs of sides of the deck and the clearance space to be between the downwardly extending rails and unobstructed except for the central support. This clearance space is obstructed only by the central support. Figure 2 of Haskins shows two rails, or edges 6, and two legs 34. Neither of the two legs 34 are located intermediate both pairs of sides of the deck as required by amended claim 1. Both of these legs 34 are adjacent to a longitudinal side and are in the clearance space of amended

claim 1.

The shipping tray of claim 1 is claimed to have a clearance space between the rails unobstructed except for the central support which is located intermediate both pairs of sides of the deck. One use for the clearance space as described in the specification is to allow a carrier, such as a hand truck, to position its lifting tongue below the mini-pallet (See page 4, lines 3-5). This would allow a portion of the tongue to extend into the clearance space. The clearance space as claimed and clarified by amended claim 1 is not present in the Haskins reference. Accordingly, Haskins lacks both a fully central support and a clearance space unobstructed save for said fully central support and neither Claim 1 nor dependent claims 2-6, 15, 16, 18 and 20 are anticipated by Haskins.

Claims 1-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C §103 as being unpatentable over Haskins in view of John, U.S. Patent No. 5,860,369. Claims 1, 23, and 24 have been amended to require a clearance space located below the deck between the legs except for the central support located intermediate each pair of opposing sides of the deck. John has a central support 25 intermediate each pair of opposing sides of the deck, but does not have the required clearance space since John has two extra supports 42 (or four extra supports 38,40) extending into the clearance space. This clearance space is required by the claims to be unobstructed except for the central support. As discussed above, Haskins has neither the required support intermediate both pairs of opposing sides, nor the required clearance space unobstructed except for the central support since Haskins has two legs 34 extending into the clearance space, only one of which could be the “central support”. Since neither of the references teach the limitation of the clearance space being unobstructed except for the central

support, the combination of these references also does teach or suggest this limitation.

Accordingly, claims 1-24 are not obvious in light of Haskins in view of Johns.

The advantages of having the center support located at the center of the deck as the only obstruction within the clearance space is discussed in the specification at page 5, line 17 - page 6, line 1 and page 10, line 7 - page 11, line 9. Accordingly, there is no teaching in Haskins, nor John, nor the combination thereof, to have both a clearance space and a central support located in the center of the deck as required by the pending claims. Allowance of claims 1-24 is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY

As amended, claims 1-24 require a clearance space below the deck between the legs (rails) with the one exception of the central support which is located in about the center of the deck. None of the cited references contain this structure or suggest that it would be obvious to one skilled in the art. In fact, the applicant has explained why it would be counter-intuitive to construct the claimed mini-pallet, as its effective use also requires a specially constructed hand truck tongue.

Accordingly, as amended, claims 1-24 are believed to be allowable, and such favorable action is respectfully requested.